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Letter dated 27 August 2001 from the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1132 (1997) concerning Sierra Leone addressed to the President of the Security Council

I would appreciate it if the present letter, together with its annex, were brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council and issued as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Anwarul Karim **Chowdhury**
Chairman
Security Council Committee established pursuant to
resolution 1132 (1997) concerning Sierra Leone

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Annex

Letter dated 23 August 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations addressed to the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1132 (1997) concerning Sierra Leone

Upon instructions of my Government, I have the honour to forward herewith the text of a press statement issued by the Government of Sierra Leone on 21 August 2001 (see enclosure), relating to an incident and police investigation of suspected transactions in illicit or "blood" diamonds in the Freetown area. The statement underscores the commitment of the Government of Sierra Leone to ensuring, within the territory of Sierra Leone, full implementation of Security Council resolution 1306 (2000).

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter and its enclosure to the attention of members of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1132 (1997) concerning Sierra Leone, and subsequently have both circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ibrahim M. **Kamara**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Enclosure

Press statement
Government of Sierra Leone
State House
Freetown, Sierra Leone
21 August 2001

On Monday, 20 August 2001, around 10.45 a.m., a report was made to the police regarding a suspected illegal diamond transaction in a house in Freetown, occupied by one Bassem Jamil Sahid Mohammed. This house has been under surveillance for some time for suspected illicit dealings in blood diamonds.

A team of detectives obtained a search warrant and conducted a search of the premises in question for unlawful possession of diamonds. Gibril Massaquoi, spokesman for the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), together with other RUF members Patrick Vogley and Kenneth Macauley were found in the premises and were said to be guests of Mr. Mohammed. Individuals were not searched. In searching the premises, a black handbag was seen, and the police wanted to take a look at the contents thereof. Gibril Massaquoi said the bag belonged to him. He opened the bag briefly and the police saw a huge amount of money, which appeared to be in the hundreds of thousands of United States dollars. Mr. Massaquoi did not allow the police to count the money, and refused to hand over the bag. Instead, he claimed that the total sum of money in his possession was US$ 13,400. He claimed further that the sum of money in his possession was given to him by Colonel Issa Sesay, to obtain premises for the RUF office in Freetown.

He was invited to the headquarters of the Criminal Investigation Department and requested to bring along the handbag containing the money that had not been counted by the police investigating team. Massaquoi drove in his own vehicle. Before arriving at the headquarters, he diverted his route and went to the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).

Massaquoi claimed that the search demonstrated that he was a target of harassment by the Government. He issued a threat claiming that the peace process would be hampered as a result of the search. His claim about being targeted is false. The Government wishes it to be known that there are several very senior RUF ex-combatants in Freetown, working well with the Government and UNAMSIL in furthering the peace process.

Mr. Massaquoi was at a suspected crime scene and items discovered at the scene incriminated the occupant of the house, Mr. Bassem Jamil Sahid Mohammed. These items included three current Sierra Leonean passports, one of them a diplomatic passport, and a Lebanese passport, all in Mr. Mohammed's name. In addition to the above, documents containing information on illegal transactions in suspected blood diamonds were found in the premises. The Government has been working diligently to ensure that the United Nations ban on blood diamonds is respected by every citizen and resident in Sierra Leone. In that vein, the Government wishes to reiterate that all citizens and residents are subject to the laws and regulations governing the State. Citizens and/or residents suspected of involvement in criminal activities are subject to the regular procedures for investigating such criminal activities. Hence, search procedures by the police relating directly to suspected criminal activities could in no way be described as actions that disrupt or impede the peace process.